Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claim 1 (currently amended): An answering machine detection method for a voice message delivery system comprising the steps of:

(a) placing an outbound call to a Recipient;

(b) detecting a telephone line pick-up; ~~and~~

~~(c) detecting a difference at a voice message server between an existing answering machine telephone line pick-up and a live Recipient telephone line pick-up.~~

(c) playing a prompt; and

(d) determining, at a voice message server, that the telephone line pick-up was by an existing answering machine if there is talk-over during the playing of the prompt.

Claim 2 (cancelled)

Claim 3 (currently amended): The answering machine detection method of Claim ~~2, and~~1 further comprising the steps of:

(~~d~~e) waiting for silence if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~an~~the existing answering machine;

(~~e~~f) playing a message if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~an~~the existing answering machine; and

(~~f~~g) playing a message if the telephone line pick-up was by a live Recipient.

Claim 4 (currently amended): The answering machine detection method of Claim 3~~, and~~ further comprising the steps of:

(~~g~~h) detecting talk-over during playing of the message if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~an~~the existing answering machine; and

(~~h~~i) restarting the playing of the message if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~an~~the existing answering machine and talk-over is detected during playing of the message.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The answering machine detection method of Claim 3, wherein step (e~~f~~) comprises:

~~(e)~~ playing a first message if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~an~~the existing answering machine;
and further wherein step (~~f~~g) comprises:

~~(f)~~ playing a second message different from the first message if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~a~~the live Recipient.

Claim 6 (currently amended): The answering machine detection method of Claim 3, wherein step (~~f~~g) comprises:

~~(f)~~ playing a message and playing at least one interactive option if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~a~~the live Recipient.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The answering machine detection method of Claim 3, wherein step (~~f~~g) comprises:

~~(f)~~ playing at least one interactive reject option, playing a message, and playing at least one interactive option if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~a~~the live Recipient.

Claim 8 (currently amended): ~~The~~An answering machine detection method ~~of Claim 1, wherein~~
~~step (e) comprises:~~for a voice message delivery system comprising the steps of:

_____ (a) placing an outbound call to a Recipient;

_____ (b) detecting a telephone line pick-up;

_____ (c) playing, by a voice message server, a first voice message to the Recipient;

(e1d) playing, by the voice message server, a ~~prompt~~second voice message, different from the first voice message, that requests a touch-tone input from the Recipient; and

~~(e2) listening for the requested touch-tone input;~~

(e3e) determining the telephone line pick-up was by ~~an existing answering machine~~a live Recipient if the requested touch-tone input is ~~heard~~received at the voice message server.

Claim 9 (currently amended): ~~The~~An answering machine detection method ~~of Claim 1, wherein step (c) comprises:~~for a voice message delivery system comprising the steps of:

(a) placing an outbound call to a Recipient;

(b) detecting a telephone line pick-up;

(~~c1~~c) ~~playing a prompt that~~ request~~s~~ing, by a voice message server, a specific speech input from the Recipient; and

(~~c2) listening for the requested specific speech input;~~

(~~c3~~d) determining the telephone line pick-up was by ~~an existing answering machine~~a live Recipient if the requested specific speech input is ~~heard~~received at the voice message server.

Claim 10 (currently amended): The answering machine detection method of Claim ~~2~~1, wherein step (c~~1~~) comprises:

(~~c1)~~ playing ~~a~~the prompt within one second of detecting ~~a~~the telephone line pick-up.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The answering machine detection method of Claim ~~2~~1, wherein step (c~~1~~) comprises:

(~~c1a)~~ detecting voice energy after detecting ~~a~~the telephone line pick-up; and

(~~c1b)~~ playing ~~a~~the prompt within one second of detecting the voice energy.

Claim 12 (currently amended): The answering machine detection method of Claim ~~2~~1, wherein step (c~~1~~) comprises:

(~~c1a)~~ detecting voice energy and ~~the~~an end of voice energy after detecting ~~a~~the telephone line pick-up; and

(~~c1b)~~ playing ~~a~~the prompt within one second of detecting the end of the voice energy.

Claim 13 (currently amended): The answering machine detection method of Claim ~~2~~1, wherein step (c~~1~~) comprises:

(~~c1)~~ playing a prompt that introduces ~~a~~the outbound call to a live Recipient.

Claim 14 (currently amended): The answering machine detection method of Claim ~~2~~1, wherein step (c~~1~~) comprises:

(~~c1)~~ playing a prompt that introduces ~~a~~the outbound call to a live Recipient by playing a prompt selected from the group consisting of~~:~~ "This is a message from [Sender's name]~~,~~"~~;~~ "This is a call from [Sender's name]~~,~~"~~;~~ and "[Sender's name] has sent you a message."

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Claim 15 (currently amended): An apparatus for detecting an answering machine for a voice message delivery system ~~including~~comprising a ~~TeleMail S~~voice message server connectable to a telephone communications system, wherein the ~~TeleMail S~~voice message server operates to:

(a) place an outbound call to a Recipient;

(b) detect a telephone line pick-up; ~~and~~

~~(c) detect a difference at a voice message server between an existing answering machine telephone line pick-up and a live Recipient telephone line pick-up.~~

(c) play a prompt; and

(d) determine that the telephone line pick-up was by an existing answering machine if there is talk-over during the playing of the prompt.

Claim 16 (cancelled)

Claim 17 (currently amended): The apparatus for detecting an answering machine for a voice message delivery system of Claim ~~16~~15, wherein the ~~TeleMail S~~voice message server additionally operates to:

(~~d~~e) wait for silence if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~an~~the existing answering machine;

(~~e~~f) play a message if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~an~~the existing answering machine; and

(~~f~~g) play a message if the telephone line pick-up was by a live Recipient.

Claim 18 (currently amended): The apparatus for detecting an answering machine for a voice message delivery system of Claim 17, wherein the ~~TeleMail S~~voice message server additionally operates to:

(~~g~~h) detect talk-over during playing of the message if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~an~~the existing answering machine; and

(~~h~~i) restart the playing of the message if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~an~~the existing answering machine and talk-over is detected during playing of the message.

Claim 19 (currently amended): The apparatus for detecting an answering machine for a voice message delivery system of Claim 17, wherein the ~~TeleMail S~~voice message server in step (e<u>f</u>) operates to:

(e) play a first message if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~an~~<u>the</u> existing answering machine;

and further wherein the ~~TeleMail S~~voice message server in step (f<u>g</u>) operates to:

(f) play a second message different from the first message if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~a~~<u>the</u> live Recipient.

Claim 20 (currently amended): The apparatus for detecting an answering machine for a voice message delivery system of Claim 17, wherein the ~~TeleMail S~~voice message server in step (f<u>g</u>) operates to:

(f) play ~~a~~<u>the</u> message and play at least one interactive option if the telephone line pick-up was by ~~a~~<u>the</u> live Recipient.

Claim 21 (cancelled)